

"OH, WOMAN WITH THE PALLID BROW."

BY SALLIE M. DRYAN.

Oh, woman with the pallid brow.

That aches for wasted trust,
Is there no other world, that thou
Must weep that this is—dust?

Is there no kingdom in whose sphere
They ring no funeral bells?
Forgettest thou 'tis only here
The flowers are asphodels?

Where others for false lovers grieve,
A thing thou couldst not do,
I see thee turn away, and leave
Thy smiles and wonder too.

Yet now thy spirit's burning springs
Gush wild, tho' thou shouldst know
If lovers false are worthless things
Friends false are far below.

Hast thou not seen this fable old
Through misty centuries:—
The dragon guarding fruits of gold
In the Hesperides?

Fate is that dragon's ghost: tower-dial,
It haunts a grave as fair,
And fruits for which the world is mad
Still—out of reach—hang there.

But know that grove where longing stops
To grasp at glitterings rare,
A mirage full of great sphered drops
Of void, sun-gilded—air.

But is thy soul a humming-bird,
So used to calm and light
It could not bear the storm that stirr'd
And shook the dark to-night?

And would the tiny coward shrink
From autumn's tempest-flows,
And, like a summer-fairy, drink
The moonlight from the rose?

I thought it was an eagle, nursed
On lightning-haunted steep;
I thought that whirlwind songs had burst
Against its cradled sleep.

I thought it flew, alone and proud,
In some supernal glow,
When the great fountains of the cloud
Were broken up below.

Thou say'st: Alas, it soared too high,
O'er dust and dusty things;
That death of death, which can not die,
Has struck its daring wings.

Thou say'st that 'mid the crowding throng
None know, tho' many woo;
Ah, woman, woman thou art wrong—
I know—and scorn thee too.

Nor I alone: the sun and stars
Smile down derisively;
The wind laughs thro' the night's black bars,
Hoarse, mocking laughs at thee.

We see thy white hands, clasped in vain,
Thy dark, uplifted eyes,
Yet scorn thee—for the very pain
That in thy spirit lies!

Yes, scorn thee that such soul as thine,
For faded, fallen clay,
Has dared with tears to dim its shine,
Has torn its crown away.

For this that soul, an angel lost,
Worthy no more to wear
God's signet-ring of fire, is tossed
Down billowy despair.

It feels a hot space on its brow
Erewhile with glory starr'd—
Then weep—weep as thou wilt—for now
The gates of Heaven are barr'd.

Ah, thou can'st weep no more—at last
Thy breast is stony-still—
The fire and splendor of thy past
Are drown'd beneath a chill.

Thy former self—that queen of queens
Whose royalty was pride—
Has stained her purple's shining sheen,
And bow'd her head—and died!